



R U OK? Day 2021

every connection matters™



R U OK? Day 2021

R U OK? Day is a national suicide prevention initiative developed in 2009 that encourages us to act and ask, "Are you okay?" to anyone who might be struggling with life. This year, R U OK? day is on Thursday 9th September and we are all being encouraged to ask: "Are they really okay?"

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, over 3,000 Australians die from suicide each year, whilst 65,000 Australians will make a suicide attempt.

More than ever, it is vital to be able to spot signs of suicide risk and engage in meaningful conversations to safely support those who are struggling. Therefore, this month we will look at what suicidal thoughts are, the impact of COVID-19 on suicide risk, and how you can help.

Understanding Suicide

What are Suicidal Thoughts?

Suicidal thoughts are thoughts a person has about wanting to end their life. These thoughts include consideration of suicide or planning.

Suicidal thoughts can include thoughts such as:

- Thinking they are a burden on others and that their death will benefit their loved ones
- Wanting relief from physical, psychological, and/or emotional pain
- Feeling that their death would not matter.

What Causes Someone to have Suicidal Thoughts?

There is not one cause of suicide, but it always begins with a thought. Suicidal behaviour is incredibly complex; often suicidal thoughts arise due to a combination of interrelated factors. These may include stressful life events, mental illness, grief and loss, financial stress, trauma exposure, physical illness, or genetics.

Suicide and COVID-19

2021 has continued to be a time of change and uncertainty. We continue to experience the full effects of COVID-19, with many people reporting feeling disconnected, isolated, and alone. Many are experiencing a sense of hopelessness and helplessness about their future and experiencing increased worry, stress and anxiety across several areas of life. The compounding result can jeopardise a person's mental health, and can create more opportunities for suicidal thoughts to arise.

What are the Signs Someone may Need Support?

Have a look around you at the people in your life and consider whether they have experienced any changes that might give you the indication they are not okay. Look out for changes in their physical appearance, mood, behaviour, and thoughts.

Ask yourself if they are displaying any of the following warning signs:

- Withdrawing from others
- Losing interest in things previously enjoyed
- Irritability, mood swings, or easily upset
- Engaging in risky behaviours
- Thinking the worst or struggling to see a positive side.

How Can I Help? Four Steps to Follow this R U OK? Day

Despite the worrying statistics around suicide, it is possible to prevent suicide. By simply asking how people are and offering your support, you can help combat feelings of isolation for others and help guide them to appropriate help.

R U OK? Day promotes four conversation steps to give you the skills and confidence to navigate a conversation with someone you are worried about.

CALL 1300 364 273 SMS 0401 33 77 11

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acaciaEAP
employee assistance program

Before starting, ensure you are in a good headspace to engage in the conversation, and you have time available. It's also important to remember that if you ask how someone is going, the answer may be that they are not okay.

Step 1: ASK R U OK?

- Be relaxed, friendly and concerned in your approach
- Help them open up by asking questions, such as "How are you going?"
- Mention specific things that have made you concerned for them, such as "You seem less chatty than usual. How are you going?"

If they don't want to talk, avoid forcing them to engage in a conversation. Confirm that you are concerned about the changes you have noticed and that you care about them.

Step 2: Listen

- Listen without judgement, and with an open mind.
- Don't judge their experiences or reactions, but acknowledge that things seem tough for them
- If they need time to think, sit patiently with the silence
- Encourage them to explain, "How long have you felt that way?"

Step 3: Encourage Action

Help them find strategies to better manage their load. Remember, you do not need to have all the answers, but encourage them to seek the support they need. Be positive about the role of professionals in supporting us through tough times. If they've been feeling really down for more than 2 weeks, encourage them to see a health professional.

- Ask: "What have you done in the past to manage similar situations?"
- Ask: "How would you like me to support you?"
- Ask: "What's something you can do for yourself right now?"

Step 4: Check-in

Staying in touch and following up shows genuine care and concern, and can make a real difference. Pop a reminder in your diary to call them in a few days, or a week or two. You could say: "I've been thinking of you and wanted to know how you've been going". Ask if they have found a better way to manage the situation. If they have not done anything, don't judge them; they might just need someone to listen to them for the moment.

Additional Resources

How to Practice and Get Tips

R U OK? have released resources that you and your workplace can use every day, in a variety of settings. Further details on these initiatives and resources can be found on their [website](#).

Where to Find Help

If you are concerned for another you can:

- Call or give them the number for your EAP, Acacia Connection (1300 364 273)
- Speak to your manager, your supervisor, or your HR if you are concerned about someone at work or need support at work
- Connect the person to a GP or encourage them to contact Lifeline on 13 11 14
- If you believe someone is in immediate danger, contact 000.

This R U OK? Day, reach out to someone you haven't spoken to in a while and check in with how they are. You never know the difference it can make.

Reference: *A conversation can change a life.* R U OK?. ruok.org.au.

